



EC Students' Association

Lead Rep Report

March 2025

Introduction

Our Lead Rep Programme was launched in November 2024 and intends to facilitate conversations and feedback gathering from students who represent a range of departments, campuses, academic disciplines and levels.

Meeting 2: Decolonising the Curriculum

For our second round of meetings, we worked with colleagues Jakki Jeffery and Nina Munday to ask students to contribute to the discussion of 'decolonising the curriculum'. While this is a complex topic, the over-arching understanding of this concept was explained as ensuring that the college is not teaching solely from a predominantly western, white viewpoint.

Across meetings held at Granton, Milton Road and Sighthill campuses, we had a total of 15 Lead Reps in attendance.

- Granton Attendees: Thai, Ruben, Carlo, Oskar and Hannah.
- Milton Road Attendees: Nicholas, Zak and Harry.
- Sighthill Attendees: Pola, Easter, Lauryn, Shakira, Ryan, Teagan and Lucy.

Discussion around curriculum areas

The students discussed their relevant subject areas. There was a general recognition of the concept of 'decolonising the curriculum' is difficult for students to understand without defining the terms.

- Art History – white western canon and approaches
- Illustration – looking at different exhibitions; trips to galleries; more diverse art. Freedom to pick any artists, but for their 2D project, the films were all western.
- Computing – people who contributed to the field are only mentioned in passing, it's more about the tools and skills. There was an acknowledgement that it is perhaps harder to diversify the curriculum unless you're studying people.
- Art – not a whole lot of diversity, only one non-western option, researching artists who are POC can be more difficult.
- Music – can choose your own course and case studies.
- Filmmaking – explore a wider range of techniques rather than focusing on white nations.

Students also highlighted that sometimes difficulties crop up with online research because there may not be sources available in translation. They also highlighted that there is a lack of black female presence in their fields. There was also a recognition that examining bodies like SQA need to diversify their resources further.

Jakki highlighted that in industry partners there is also a lack of diversity, which potentially impacts on who thinks that apprenticeships are 'for them'. The college looking at industry champions to try and counteract this.

Feeding back to curriculum staff

We discussed the role of the students being a 'critical friend' to staff. While many staff are open to feedback and advice from students, some students highlighted that teachers can be difficult to challenge (based on previous bad experiences, e.g. at High School).

In quieter classes, this type of feedback or discussion might not be fruitful. In these instances, we discussed different mechanisms that staff could collect feedback from students, such as feedback post-it notes available after class, or anonymised feedback on Google Forms.

Diversity of staff

Nina talked through some key stats around the demographics at the college. Currently, BAME students make up 13% of the student population, while BAME staff currently represent 3.6% of staff. A good percentage of diverse staff apply and are shortlisted to roles; the problem comes after the interview phase. Ideally it would be best if the makeup of the staff reflected that of the student population.

There was also a brief discussion of the need of the college's Board of Management to reflect the diversity of those studying here.

Call it Out campaign

Nina highlighted the 'Call It Out' campaign, where students and staff can report hate, racism, misogyny either anonymously or with their contact details. Students agreed this was a good scheme and emphasised the importance having the anonymous reporting option available. Nina also highlighted the College's inclusive calendar.

Real-life experiences

There was a discussion of what students would do if they saw a racist incident.

- Advocating for people is tricky: not always best, but also de-escalating the situation is the most important thing, thinking about non-violence and safety
- Difference between culture differences and where you grow up – confronting people and educating yourself.
- Not trying to be a saviour but also standing up to others.

There was a discussion of how students felt at college. Most students felt that the College was broadly a welcoming place, and that they hadn't witnessed racism or homophobia. However, there was a discussion of homophobic graffiti that had been spotted in the male toilets on the 3rd floor at Granton.

One student (Access to Nursing) said that people had experienced racism in the class but felt that nothing was done about it – makes people feel unheard and disillusioned.

Another student said that their friend was called the 'n' word. No one reacted and made the victim felt alienated. The student checked on the friend and made sure that they were ok. The incident was not reported.

Training opportunities

The 'Let's talk about Race' course that is available for staff to attend was mentioned; students also discussed the benefits of undergoing active bystander training.

Action points

- Students who were interested in attending the Black Leadership Group Conference at Dynamic Earth on 20th March registered their interest with Genevieve.
- Lead Reps will have the opportunity to be involved with the college-wide Decolonising the Curriculum group going forward.
- There is potential for a conference on this topic to be organised and held at Edinburgh College in future.
- There is going to be a paid opportunity for students to get involved in the [Student Commission of Racial Justice via Leaders Unlocked](#) which is has been working with English colleges and will be expanding to Scottish colleges later in 2025.
- Students' Association should continue to ensure that students are encouraged to report incidents of racism, hatred, misogyny etc via the online form.
- Explore delivering a training about race, active bystander training etc to students as well as to staff.
- Dealing with the spread of misinformation by social media is important.
- Nina reported the homophobic graffiti with Estates after the meeting, it was removed.